

Reflective Curriculum Planning for Infants and Toddlers
Track A1 – Inclusive Child Development
17th Annual Virtual Birth to Three Institute

Kelly: For today's conference, we'll be taking questions via our private chat. If you look down towards the lower left of the screen, you will see a tab marked public and private. If you click on the private tab, you will see an option for leaders and assistants. Please submit your questions that way. They will go to all of the presenters today we'll be able to answer your questions. Those can be done throughout the conference, so if you do have questions, go ahead and put them in there and we'll answer them at the end when we have time for the Q& A session. We will not be using the hand raise status, so if you do have any questions or have any technical issues, please send those via the private chat and we will get those addressed and taken care of for you. With that, I would like to pass the presentation over to Emily Adams. Emily?

Emily Adams: Thank you so much, Kelly. Hi. I am so excited to have the opportunity to welcome everybody here today to the first webinar of our Virtual Birth to Three. We have some wonderful speakers today who are going to share with us about what reflective curriculum planning looks like for infants and toddlers. Throughout the session today we're going to be requesting that you participate as well, so be prepared for that. Thank you.

Now, I have the pleasure of introducing our speakers. We have Mary Jane Maguire-Fong. She has a long career as a professor of early childhood education at American River College in Sacramento, California. Prior to that, she helped develop child care programs for migrant farm worker families. She also serves as faculty for the Program for Infant/Toddler Care and as a consultant in early childhood education and mental health. Her work is influenced by the philosophy of teaching in the birth to 5 programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy, which I think you will see today.

And we also have Margie Perez-Sesser. She is an early childhood consultant and also works part-time as faculty for the Program for Infant/Toddler Care. She's been an instructor for community colleges. She's been a director for Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, state preschool, and private nonprofit programs. She also has experience working with families in the drug and alcohol treatment programs serving infants and toddlers with special needs.

We're so excited to welcome both of you speakers today. Mary Jane, will you please start telling us about what infant learning looks like?

Mary Jane Maguire-Fong: Thank you Emily, thank you. And thank you all to our long list of participants. This is quite exciting. Thank you for joining us to explore a very important question. What does curriculum look like when we are working with infant and toddlers? But to answer this question we really have to pose another question first. What does learning look like when we're talking about babies? These are very important questions for those of us who are preparing educational environments, whether in centers or in homes, for infants and toddlers. So let's go in search of an answer to these questions by calling upon a few experts.

Now, before we meet our first expert, who you see at the bottom of the screen here, I want you to reflect on your own ideas about infants and toddlers. Again, Emily said you're going to help us with this.

We want you to participate. So please reflect on your own ideas about infants and toddlers and decide which of these statements on your screen – which one fits with your own understanding of babies? Is it A) Infants and toddlers are very limited in what they can take in? Or is it B) Infants and toddlers are able to take in a vast amount of information at any one point in time? So we want you to think, is statement A the one that makes most sense to you or is statement B the one that makes most sense to you? And we're going to give you some time to think about this. Emily's going to help you negotiate what you have to do to let us know your opinion on this. And then when we're through, she'll summarize our results. Emily?

Emily: Hi, thank you. So it looks like many of you have found the feedback button below – on the left – middle left-hand side of your screen. So as you're thinking about this question – which of these is true? – please click A or B so that we know what you're thinking here, whether infants and toddlers are very limited in what kind of information they can take in or whether they really can take in quite a lot of information at any one point in time. So, go ahead and vote. I'm going to give you just a couple more seconds if you haven't already voted. We really would like to get everybody to participate.

So I think we've got a pretty good number here. And it looks like overwhelmingly, of those who have voted, those feel that B) Infants and toddlers are able to take in a vast amount of information at any one point in time. Mary Jane, it looks like we're ready to consult with an expert to find out which statement comes closest to being true.

Mary Jane: Well – well, Emily, I do have our first expert here. This is – this is Will. Here you see three photos of Will. I want you to closely examine these photos and spend a few seconds just looking at each photo on the screen. And ask yourself, "What do I notice here? What is it that Will is doing and how might he be revealing to me what he might be thinking?" So just take a few minutes – not a few minutes – a few seconds here to study these photos.

Okay. I want to show you what was happening above Will at this moment. These are the Flying Eagles. They're a U.S. Navy flight squadron performing at an airshow, and Will's father flies with this squadron. Will was well aware of what was going on above him. Yet, he was eagerly searching for small, brown-grey rocks tucked below the sprigs of hay covering the ground. Will spent close to 10 minutes with jets streaming above and loudspeakers blaring in search of these tiny treasures, with grandpa ready to take his offerings. A vast world of discoveries rested below his feet.

So, I want you to keep that in mind and then go with me to the next place that we want to explore here. And that's what the science is telling us, because we're going to ground this talk about infant/toddler curriculum in science. This link that you see at the bottom of your screen here leads to the website of Dr. Alison Gopnik, a professor of developmental psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. Gopnik is very well known for her research on how young children think. And you can find this image that you see on your screen on her website.

Gopnik says that scientists used to believe that babies were very limited in their thinking and in their ability to gather information from the world around them. However, recently, studies have begun to show that babies learn more, create more, care more, and experience more than we ever imagined. Gopnik uses this image as a metaphor. You see an infant lantern image on the left and an adult spotlight image on the right. She uses this image as a metaphor. And much like a lantern that projects light in a 360 degree – a full circle arc, babies gather information from a wide array of sources all at the same moment and they do so throughout the day. So – and we lose this capacity as we age, as you can see

from her – from her image here. So in other words, Will was taking in the airshow, yet he was gathering precious information about rocks at the same time.

So, we want you to consider another question as you ponder this – this image of infants as learners. We want you to look at the question on the screen now and think about which one is true – or whether this statement is true or false. Okay, the statement is: Infants as young as 6 months of age notice how things are the same or different. So, we want you to think about this and then answer yes or no. Is this true or not? And again, Emily will give you some time to do this and then summarize our results. Emily?

Emily: Thank you. So we're wondering, can babies really notice things that are the same or different? Can they really be scientists even at this young age? If you think this is true, click the little green yes; and if you think this isn't quite – that at 6 months they really can't quite do this yet, please click the on the red next to the no. And we're just about ready. It looks like we have quite a lot of people answering. And it does look like most people feel that this is true; that it's true that at 6 months, infants are able to discern whether things are the same or different. Mary Jane, do you have another expert for us to consult to find out which answer is correct?

Mary Jane: I do. This is really fun to watch people's responses. [Laughter] I think we are working with a wonderfully astute, thoughtful group of baby lovers here who know babies very well, and that's exciting. We'd like you to meet our next expert. This is Severyn. Severyn here is 6 months old. And I've taken some still clips from a video sequence that I filmed of Severyn when he was 6 months old.

Here you see him intent on examining in the top photo. He's using his eyes and his fingers to examine a soap dish – a little plastic soap dish. After several minutes, he flings the soap dish off to his right and I've – I've put in a little red arrow in the first photo in the second row where you can see him fling the soap dish off to the right. And then you see a second arrow pointing to the location of a second, identical soap dish tucked behind a larger ribbed soap dish. So Severyn scans the toys in front of him a few seconds and then he catches sight of this second small soap dish over to his other side and he picks it up. He spends a few minutes mouthing it, peering at it, and fingering it before turning to his right and then looking down towards the spot where the first soap dish had landed. And you can see this in the bottom row of photos. He leans over and he lays one soap dish on top of the other.

So we have caught Severyn in the act of figuring out that these two distinct objects are identical. One matches the other. So what Severyn is telling us, and scientists concur, infants arrive at birth with an amazing capacity to gather and organize vast amounts of information. They are active learners making meaning within moment-by-moment, everyday encounters with the world around them and with others. And it is this – it's this piece that is the critical part to consider with respect to the Early Head Start Standards required of Early Head Start teachers and family support specialists.

Infants and toddlers build a foundation for all later life learning. And they do this much like scientists. Like scientists they explore, they investigate, they experiment, they form hypotheses. If I do this, I think that will happen. Here you see a photo. If I drop the ball in this hole, it will go down the tube into teacher Zora's hands or the basket. That's a hypothesis. They form theories about how things work and how one thing relates to another. Oh, only the round objects travel down the tube. That's a theory.

So, we want to give you a glimpse into some of the research related to how babies think and learn. And before we do that, we want to pose another question for you. Emily, do you want to explain our survey question and what we want our participants to do?

Emily: Yes, thank you. So right now we've got Kelly bringing up a question here, and I'm going to explain to you how this works. You can choose up to three options here. So, go ahead and take a look. Each of these choices are the same, so you have the same set of four choices on each section of the three sections. And so, choose up to one from each section that you believe is true. So, the choices are: babies do statistics; babies predict what is likely to occur and what is not; babies can tell if someone is trying to be helpful or not; or none of the above are true.

So go ahead and take a moment. Your first choice, and then if you have another choice you can choose another one. And you may also choose up to three different options. And so, in just a moment we're going to go ahead and have Kelly give us the results. So, what do you think? Can babies do statistics? Can you do statistics? Can babies predict what is likely to happen next? And can babies tell if somebody is trying to be helpful or not? Or are none of these really true?

So, I'm hoping that everybody has participated and I'm going to go ahead and ask Kelly to give us the results. So, that will take just a moment for that to show up on your screen. And we'll have what most people think here about whether babies are little mathematicians figuring things out. Let's see; Kelly, are you there ready to give us some answers?

Kelly: You should be seeing the results.

Emily: Okay. I am not – so I'm not sure what our audience can see right now, but if you can see the results then you know what everybody is thinking. And otherwise, I think let's just go ahead. I'm going to go ahead and pass it back to Mary Jane because I would like to know what exactly she has to say about what babies can understand.

Mary Jane: Well, that was kind interesting to read. Actually, this'll be – this'll be fun to play with a little bit because the group – generally, there was – there are a lot of people responding that babies can predict whether something is likely to happen or not. And – and somewhat fewer people were saying yes, infants can do statistics. And then somewhat fewer around the issue of, you know, whether they can tell whether somebody's trying to be nice or not. So, let's see what the science is actually telling us. Just a little bit of science; not too much here.

So to teach when working with infants and toddlers, we have to think a little bit differently. We need to build what we do on clear understanding of how babies make sense of the world and how they learn. And you know, this has been a mystery for the most part until recent decades when scientists began to come up with some pretty clever ways to study this question of what babies are conscious of and how they learn. And our survey question gave you a hint about what the scientists have discovered.

If you want to know more about what they've discovered, on this slide and on the next one we've given you the Web addresses that let you do a little more research after the webinar. These links will take you to the websites – or the one on the bottom takes you to a video where you can hear each of these scientists talking about how babies learn. And the first link takes you to Dr. Alison Gopnik's – the researcher we spoke of before – to her website. She's co-author of the book, "The Scientist in the Crib." Her recent book is titled – you see it on the top right part of your screen – is titled "The Philosophical Baby," and these titles alone tell it all. Babies think much like scientists and philosophers.

So then, the second link takes you to a short talk by researcher and scientist Dr. Patricia Kuhl. She is co-author with Gopnik of the book "The Scientist in the Crib. Their research, as well as that of others, has revealed a little-known fact about babies. Indeed, babies calculate statistics. And here you see a 6-month-old baby at the bottom of the screen from one of Kuhl's studies. She's listening to a story read in the Mandarin Chinese language. Babies not only listen and watch what goes on around them, but they actually calculate statistics on the sounds that they need to know or how many of what types of objects they're looking at. Pretty amazing stuff, I think. It's pretty amazing.

If you want to learn more, you can follow these links after the webinar and hear each of these scientists share what they've learned from watching and listening to babies. Now, another researcher, Dr. Karen Wynn from Yale University – and you see her website at the top of your screen here – invites babies as young as 3 and 4 months of age to watch puppet shows with puppets that show kind or unkind behavior. The babies almost always prefer the nicer puppets to the mean ones.

And at the bottom of your screen, another team of researchers, Tomasello and Warneken, from the Max Planck Institute in Germany. They put toddlers in situations where they see someone who needs help. Here you see – in the small photo at the bottom of the screen, you see a man carrying a full load of books with both hands occupied. The man's unable to open the doors of the storage closet. The toddler sees this. He sees that the man tries and fails to open the door on his own, so the toddler walks over and assists by opening the door without anyone saying anything. The toddler appears to know when someone is in need.

So again, if you want to know more about what scientists have discovered, after the webinar you can follow the links that we've provided on these two slides and learn more. But in summary, we want you to take as the message to go forth with here, infants are built to spend their days listening, watching, studying, and trying to figure out the world around them.

And Carlina Rinaldi, from the internationally recognized early childhood schools in Reggio Emilia, she helps us think about how we can apply this research in our work with infants, toddlers, and their families. She says, "We as teachers" – and if you're a family service worker, you can put family service worker there – "are asked by children to see them as scientists or philosophers searching to understand something, to draw out a meaning. We are asked to be the child's traveling companion in this search for meaning." She goes on to say, "We are also asked to respect the meanings that children produce, the explanatory theories they develop, and their attempts to find and give answers. When we honor the children this way, the children reveal their thinking to us."

This quote, which comes from the book called "Concepts for Care," which you see the image of – from the cover you see on the screen here. This quote helps frame our image of the child as a scientist and our image of the teacher as a researcher. You'll notice that one of the editors of this book is Dr. Ron Lally, whose plenary session – inspiring plenary session opened up our session yesterday in the Virtual Birth to Three conference series.

So, teaching and learning with infants and toddlers begins with listening and watching and observing with care. This means that teachers, infants, and infants' family members form a triangle of relationships. Each cares about each other. Each learns from the other. And as we will explore during this webinar, each is open to a sense of wonder. And it is through this lens that we can begin to make sense of the Early Head Start school readiness goals. In other words, listen to infants, observe them, wonder about what it is that they are trying to figure out, and then support them in going further in

their research. Do this and you will meet Early Head Start school readiness goals. Let me get them on the screen here.

These are the Early Head Start school readiness goals: language and literacy; cognition and general knowledge; approaches to learning; physical development and health; and social and emotional development. So to meet these goals, what do we do? We build on infants' strong push to actively learn. We see them as scientists, and we see teachers or family service workers or parents as researchers.

So, now let's practice this role. Let's practice being a researcher as we work to support the learning of infants and toddlers. We're going to go back to Severyn. We're going to reflect on Severyn's play. This is the last image we saw on the screen in the photo sequence of Severyn. Think about this image of him playing with the white soap dishes. Here he is, placing one soap dish on top of the other identical soap dish, having turned away from all the other plastic objects that looked similar but were not identical.

Reflect on what he might be thinking in this moment and connect it to what we just reviewed as the Early Head Start school readiness goals. In this photo, what do you notice? How is he revealing his thinking? And how might he be giving you evidence of how he is moving towards those school readiness goals? And after you consider these questions, we'll be able to summarize what you as a group of participants are thinking about this. Emily, do you want to walk us through this?

Emily: Thank you, yes. So, we have another question for you and we want you to share with us. What are you thinking about Severyn's play as you see – hold that image in your mind of him with the soap dishes, putting one on top of the other, recognizing how similar they are? And I want you to think about the different areas, the domains that we have when we think about school readiness and the goals that we make for our children and families.

And so, I'm going to ask you again to choose up to three different choices for school readiness goals. So think about, does this contribute to his or show what he's learning in language and literacy, in cognition and general knowledge? Or does this represent approaches to learning? Maybe his physical development? Or possibly his social and emotional development? We really need your vote. We want to know what you're thinking – what you're thinking about. What he is figuring out here, what kind of learning is going on? So, I think everybody should be pretty well aware at this point of these different domains. And I'm hoping that you'll be choosing what you think is reflected as – as he's really engaged. I think of him looking – really looking at those soap dishes and really seeing what's going on.

So, I think at this point I'm going to go ahead and ask Kelly to share these results with us. Okay, and so if you can just let me know when those are up and I think I may just ask Mary Jane to give us the results.

Mary Jane: I can do that when it hits the screen.

Emily: Okay. [Laughter] Wonderful!

Mary Jane: I think we have a group of very thoughtful, reflective participants who are – who are studying their options here.

Emily: Okay. I think so, too. And you know, it may be that people are still taking a moment to respond, and that's fine. So, go ahead and let us know. Okay, are we ready? Mary Jane?

Mary Jane: I can, yes. We're going to be doing this back and forth with a couple of examples as we go forward, so you'll have a chance to do this again. And I...

Emily: Okay, so...

Mary Jane: Should I go back and just keep looking? Is Kelly going to give us some results?

Emily: I've got these results. I can see them now. So, I will go ahead and share with you. And it looks – yeah, it looks like people generally feel like this – this – overwhelmingly, about half of people said that cognition and general knowledge are – are what we can kind of see happening with Severyn as he explores here. And then, a couple people here and there chose the other domains. Okay, Mary Jane, would you like to tell us a little bit more about this?

Mary Jane: Okay, great.

Emily: Thank you.

Mary Jane: Let's see, I'm going to take a – okay, so let's talk about this. Okay? So – and I think what I – what I would really like to stress here is just on this one example of play, what we're going to call in the next part of this webinar – this is documentation of Severyn's play. In this documentation, Severyn reveals evidence that we can show as we're trying to measure his progress that his play reveals that he's advancing in cognition. There's strong agreement – very strong agreement among ourselves as a group, our participants, that he provided evidence that he's able to notice similarities as well as differences.

But I want to point out that in this one example, he's also revealing another goal: approaches to learning. He's definitely showing us that he persists in figuring things out and some of you also – also selected that, and that's important, I think, to give Severyn credit for this one, too. And then also, some of you also checked on physical development because he maintains his balance upright but he also uses his fingers. This is – this is evidence of his fine-motor control, as well. And it also – we can give him credit for social-emotional development in terms of him being very engaged and having fun. Those are definitely signs of social-emotional development.

So in this one simple observation, he's revealing lots of what I call data for our ongoing documentation of his – of his learning. So within that play, we're assessing his learning as we observe him. And I want to point out that what he's playing with are not "educational toys." Those are what Margie and I are going to describe in this webinar – those are ordinary objects. So, we're making the case here that infants and toddlers do not need expensive toys that are designed as educational toys; that infants and toddlers build skills and concepts through play with ordinary objects. And here you see a sample of the kinds of ordinary objects that were in Severyn's play space that day.

So, Margie is now going to take this idea further as we consider another very important question. What does curriculum look like when we're working with infants and toddlers? Margie, are you ready to take over?

Margie Perez-Sesser: Yes, I am; and thank you, Janie. We're going to share in the second section some examples and ideas that can help us in developing action plans that can be helpful for teachers and home-based visitors for learning that meets Head Start goals. And we're going to look at three contexts

of learning. And we're going to show you different ways of looking at play spaces, looking at routines, and looking at conversations and interactions that happen throughout the day as learning experiences.

The first place we're going to look at is play spaces as context for learning. And in this slide, we'd like you to look at this area and think about, what did the teacher have in mind when she set up this area? And what do you notice and what do you think was her or his plan in setting up this area? Oops. A little fast. What do you notice about this area? What do you think was the plan here?

And what we see is the children interacting with pipes, pieces of plumbing. But look closely at these materials. What do you think is the potential for their learning here? And what kind of planning went on to create this environment for the children to explore and wonder about? How do we create this kind of context for learning? What kind of learning might these materials inspire? And what do these objects that you see here have in common? And what do you see that's different from most infant/toddler toys you see in most programs and family child care homes? And what kind of objects do these have in common? And what do you see as different from most commercial infant and toddler toys that you see? And how do you feel about having these kinds of objects in your environment?

And I'm going to turn this over to Emily. Emily, do you want to explore this question a little bit more deeply?

Emily: Yes. And Margie, I'm just going to go ahead and ask you, when I turn it back to you, if you could speak up a little bit. It sounds like people are having some trouble hearing you.

Margie: Okay, thank you.

Emily: So, thank you. So, yes – so let's think about this series of sort of found, recycled, ordinary objects that we just saw here that Margie just shared with us. And I'm just wondering, is this something that you feel comfortable using? Whether you're a home visitor, whether you have a family child care program or if you're in center-based care, whatever kind of program you have – whatever program option you have, are these things that you feel comfortable using? And you can also think about, you know, do the parents feel comfortable seeing these sorts of play materials in your program?

So again, you have the option for feedback here on the left center of your screen, and a green click is for yes and a red click is for no. So go ahead and let us know, what do you think? Do you feel like you could go ahead and bring something out in a home visit, a couple of metal trays or some plastic containers, or is that something that you think might not be very comfortable for you or for your teachers or maybe even for your parents? So, go ahead and just take one more moment here. It looks like we have many people who've responded and a couple who haven't. So, go ahead and find that link for feedback to click and let us know what you think. I feel comfortable with these objects or I do not feel comfortable with these objects.

Okay, so let's go ahead and look at what we've got it. It looks like – I'm going to call that around 90 percent of people feel comfortable using these objects in their program. Of course, we don't know what kind of program options we have here. But you know, I just like to think about my own son, who's 14 months old right now, and one of his absolute favorite things to play with is Tupperware. He loves to open and close any kind of container. And really, at this moment, his life's work is figuring out what things might fit inside of other things. So he's constantly walking around with containers or cups or

shoes and trying to figure out what he can stick in there, like balls or hair brushes or cars. I'm often finding those sorts of things in my cup of coffee.

What I really love about these kind of materials, Margie, is that they send such a great message to parents. And that message is you don't have to go out to the expensive toy stores and spend a lot of money for really educational learning opportunities for infants and toddlers. So much of what they're interested in is these real, found, recycled objects that we all have around our house. So, Margie, would you like to continue telling us a little more maybe about some natural objects?

Margie: Yes. Thank you, Emily. One of the things that I did last summer was go to Italy and these are a picture of some rose petals I took in a classroom in Pistoia. And I thought it was wonderful about how the families brought in different things from their garden, different things from their – vegetables that they grew, and that the teachers put them in their classroom for the children to explore.

I've recently gone to, actually, the Early Head Start Conference where we had a lot of different people that were there that were exploring a lot of the different vendors that we have brought in to show us things that they've brought from nature. But I think that we also have a lot of families that have things just right in their own backyard that they can bring to share with us, and that's another way of involving our families in our curriculum. One of the things that I think is that there's so much that children can explore that we can bring indoors when the weather is not great and this is another way of being able to do this.

One of the other things that we can do is provide opportunities to include things – toys and materials from the child's home and community that relate to the child's experiences. And here we have a little boy who's in his – the play yard, and as you can see there's a lot of heavy equipment next door going on with some building that's going. And he's constructing knowledge about his world based on what he sees and then what he also has to interact with. And what a wonderful experience he has there.

The next picture, that slide that you see, is one really creative teacher brought in technology into her classroom. And she has in her block area pictures of the children that are in the classroom that she made into block area people. And this is part of a way of bringing the child's real world into his play. And it's a creative way of having the child also learn the names of the children that are in the classroom and it's a way of getting to know who are friends in the classroom. And in this same program, the teacher had this little area here in the dramatic play where the children can look out the window – the pretend window where they can see families like theirs working out in the fields. And this is just another really creative way of bringing the child's environment or community to the classroom.

Also, to the right you see some tractors and some other things that might be in the child's world. This happens to be a migrant program, Community Action Partnership at San Luis Obispo in King City, and the center's called Alegria. And we appreciate their contribution of these photos. In this particular classroom, the teachers brought in the family experiences of what they do on the weekend by bringing pictures of where the families go on the weekend, by showing pictures at the eye level of the children that have pictures of going to the flea market, going to the park, going to walks. And what you see here is areas that the children have gone with their parents, that they're able to have conversations throughout the day with their friends and with their families. And having the family input of bringing these pictures in, too, was really a wonderful way to include them in the curriculum.

Another idea of including families in the curriculum, which you see in the lower right-hand corner of this slide here, is having parent nights in which you invite the parents to share ideas that they have that they think might be different kinds of things that you can do in the classroom. And sometimes, as you know, some parents may not be able to attend that parent meeting so these teachers also put a clipboard for parents to provide their input when they're not able to attend of ideas that they might have wished that they could share if they were able to attend the meeting.

But the other thing that I think that these teachers did that were – was really a great idea was that they also took pictures of some of the activities that the parents had suggested that they knew that their children were interested in and that they had shown interest in, and that the teachers have followed up on some of these activities. And they took pictures of those parent ideas and put those on the wall too for the parents to see.

There's so many different ways we can make parents feel welcome and that we want them to know that we pay attention to what they tell us and what they share. And when we really listen to them and find out what it is that they've noticed that their children are interested in, there's so many ways that we can bring that kind of idea that this can be a learning experience. And so, what we have here is a – slides of the demonstration of children showing that – a child showing an interest in daddy's shoes. And he's very curious about all kinds of shoes. And sharing this with the teacher seems like it might be insignificant, but it can be a great learning experience. And so this teacher picked up on a parent sharing with her that the child was interested in shoes, and so the teacher was able to bring this idea of all the different kinds of learning experiences that can happen when we explore shoes.

So, I want you to think a little bit about, what kind of school readiness goals do you see that can happen when you have a display like this of shoes and how children might investigate shoes? And you see down in the lower right-hand corner where the teacher also made a book for the children about shoes. So it's a great interest for all of the children besides just that child. The other thing in programs is to remember that we have to have places where children can reflect and think just as we as adults need those times to be able to reflect and think, and creating those spaces outdoors as well as indoors is important to remember as we set up those play spaces.

Throughout the day, we have many care routines that can be wonderful opportunities for learning. And as we think about all the different opportunities that we have throughout the day as parents go through routines such as signing in and the children observe, and they would like to have those opportunities to have a sign-in too. And in this particular program, a child is finding herself in and what a wonderful early literacy experience this is. And I have always noticed that when children do this they just feel really excited that they're doing this very grownup thing, but they're not thinking that this is – this is early literacy experience because this is just a fun way to be learning how to write my name.

The other thing that many creative teachers have done is to think about different ways in which we can invite children to participate in our routines of the day. And we can do this in many different ways by setting up the classroom in which we divide up the different kinds of activities we have throughout the day and have the children participate, such as we have in this slide that shows a helper chart in which the children have different activities in which they help throughout the day. And this also helps children feel good about being able to do these different routines in helping the teacher and also helping each other.

And many times at mealtime – these experiences during mealtime can be so rich. One of the things that when we did go to the Reggio experience this summer, we noticed how much conversation happens during mealtime. And it is such a wonderful learning opportunity to be able to have children sit and be able to have a time in which they can relax and talk. But a lot of planning needs to go into this. And I know many people probably already do have opportunities for toddlers to pour and to be able to serve themselves, but not everyone might be doing this. So I'm going to turn it over to you, Emily, and let's see what people think about having very young children do this.

Emily: Thank you so much. So what we're going to ask you now is to think about your own classroom or just your own feelings – maybe if you're a home visitor, how you feel about this with families. How familiar are you with mealtimes where you're setting things up to invite toddlers to serve themselves and to pour their own milk or water? So, go ahead and take a look at the poll question that's up. Please choose whether you're not familiar; this isn't something you've really ever done. Maybe you're somewhat familiar with it; this is – you've seen it, maybe you've tried it, it didn't work out so well, and you stopped. Or is this something you're very familiar with? Is this something that you do pretty regularly?

So go ahead, we're going to take a couple of seconds here to give you a chance to answer this question. You know – and when you think about family-style meals, it really is probably influenced by how old the children in your program are, what kind of program philosophy you have, and how appropriate this would be in terms of the context of the culture of the families that you're working with. But I do think that when we're thinking about family-style meals, this is such a great place to connect with families and to really learn. What – what is your family style? What does that look like?

So, I'm going to go ahead and ask that – I think you've finished. Go ahead, click in: you're not familiar, somewhat familiar, very familiar. And then, Kelly, if you would please go ahead and show us the results here so that we can get a feel for – for what people think about this. Is this – is this something that people tend to feel like, yes, oh we do this all the time? I know this is a requirement in the Early Head Start Performance Standards that we do family-style meals, but, you know, it just kind of depends how we consider family-style.

So alright – so it looks to me like over half of you are very familiar with this opportunity where toddlers have the ability to pour their own drinks and to serve themselves. About 20 percent – 19 percent are somewhat familiar. And very few of you are – are not familiar; this is something you've really never done. So it sounds like, in general, people are very familiar with the kind of meal times that let infants and toddlers serve and pour.

You know, Margie, when you're talking about these kinds of daily routines, which really we know make up so much of the day for infants and toddlers and those who are caring for them, it reminds me yesterday of what Tweety Yates mentioned in the – the plenary about how children may have 5,400 diaper changes in the first two-and-a-half years or so. And you just think about what an amazing opportunity all of these routines offer to connect to with children and families just every day. So, Margie, will you just talk a little bit more about that, please?

Margie: Yes, thank you. As you were saying, the times that we do have that are considered routine, such as changing diapers, are wonderful opportunities for caregivers and infants to have a reciprocal kind of relationship that is a wonderful opportunity to have language development, to learn trust, to learn security, to have a – and to have this interaction. And during these wonderful times, these are golden

moments in which language and – as – I'm going to talk a little bit about what can happen during this diapering time.

When the caregiver can be able to tell the child, "I'm going to be changing your diaper. I know it's wet. I'm going to be putting a dry diaper on you." Then what the child can do is – the child can also be having a sense of trust that, "I know what's going to happen next, I'm listening. I'm able to know what's dry. I know what's wet." And this is a wonderful experience for the child. Many children as they start learning what's going to happen next also start being able to help, like putting their hips up and being able to say dry and wet.

During – throughout the day we have conversations and interactions that happen throughout the day. Children with their peers and children with the teachers, and in these everyday interactions we have a chance to expand on their language. We have a chance to show surprise and amazement at the things they do and the things they say. And when we have these kinds of moments is when we as caregivers can be able to encourage children to talk, to be able to express their feelings.

And the other times is when – sometimes when things can occur, such as biting, we have an opportunity during these times that we can say to an infant, "This hurts them. We don't bite." And – and we can use our modeling to let them know when things are good, too, and to let them know when they're being gentle with each other, when they're having gentle touches, and being able to smile and reassure them that they're being soft. And it helps them learn about being sensitive to each other. Many times children aren't trying to bite. Sometimes they are trying to kiss each other and can do it a little bit too hard. And so as we model what kinds of guidance that we can give in a positive way, that also can be curriculum. Okay. And I'm going to turn it over to Janie.

Mary Jane: Actually, I think we have one more survey question, don't we, Emily?

Emily: I think so. And I'm just going to go ahead and mention to people that if you can't see the slides, look up above where they should be and click on the tab that says Webinar A1 PowerPoint (PPT) and see if that helps you out. Margie, I liked what you said about sometimes toddlers who are biting are just trying to kiss. That happens a lot with my son right now. [Laughter]

So, I want you to think about everything that we've just heard here from Margie about – about this sort of broad view of curriculum for infants and toddlers. We're really kind of talking about a lot of different things here. And I want you to look again at the Office of Head Start – the different domains of school readiness. As we do this, I want you to think about where you might have seen examples of the various school readiness goals being addressed. Thinking about these domains – and Kelly, if you could please put the survey up for us.

And we're going to ask people to think about again – of course, you're very familiar with these: language and literacy, you know, using the names of objects and friends; or cognition and general knowledge, categorizing and matching; approaches to learning, children are interested in exploring; or physical development and health, coordinated body movements; social and emotional development, including friendships; or all of the above.

So I want you to go ahead and think about what you've seen, some of the images that she shared with you, and think about the diapering example, all the conversation. And I want you to choose – you can choose up to three choices. So, you can click three different choices in three different sections. So,

please go ahead, And maybe you think, you know, it really can cover a couple of these. Maybe you think it's all of the above. You don't have to choose three choices, but you can choose up to three choices.

Mary Jane: Emily, can I add something?

Emily: Please.

Mary Jane: So really we want – we really want you to think about everything that Margie was offering, going back to some of the early slides that she showed us when we were seeing images of some ordinary objects put out into the play spaces or the little girl doing pretend play signing in near the entry area. So, think about all of the images that Margie shared.

Emily: You know, and I'm really struck by how these simple and daily routines and sort of these moment to moment interactions are – are such a huge part of the learning that happens in these first few years. And – and what I just think is so powerful is sharing this information with parents and families. When we really help parents understand how important these day-to-day interactions are around routines and just being responsive, they really can understand what we mean when we say that they are their child's first and most important teacher. I just– I think that's so apparent here.

So what I would like, Kelly, if you would please go ahead and share with us these results when you're able to go ahead and turn it around to us, and we'll see what do people think. What are people thinking about all these wonderful sort of rich materials that are available, bringing in the family ideas? I loved the shoe example; that the teachers just took the 6-month-old's interest in shoes that maybe so many people would say, "Oh, that's really cute," but this teacher was able to say, "Wow! He's really interested in that and he's really exploring that, and we're going to support that." I just – I really loved that example. So I'm going to ask – Janie, can you see – can you see the results yet?

Mary Jane: I can.

Emily: Okay. would you please go ahead and go over those for us?

Mary Jane: Yeah. Actually, yes, I want to point out that I think our participants are recognizing, as you look at how many people selected quite a few of the options, that it doesn't take an expensive curriculum to actually support the learning of infants and toddlers. That really, it's what you put in the play spaces when you're thoughtful about the way you design the care routines and when you're very mindful about how you use conversation and interactions to support infants and toddlers in making sense of their world. That's where the curriculum really finds its way, in an appropriate way, into the teaching and learning with infants and toddlers. And that's what we're really trying to help people understand, is the foundations for thinking about Early Head Start school readiness goals and Early Head Start Standards.

So, what we want to do now is to – first of all, thank you very much, Margie, for giving us that wonderful little trip through this world of curriculum. That there are three different contexts that we need to think about; it's not just specific activities. And curriculum happens across the day. That was a really important point, as well. So what we're going to do now is to focus on what does it look like when we're talking about writing curriculum for infants and toddlers? And we're going to return to those points that we've been considering throughout – is it really has to be based on observing, on taking notes, taking photos,

which is documenting; and then interpreting, asking ourselves, so what does this mean? What does this mean?

So, we're going to think about curriculum planning in terms of a reflective process. And it's based on, first of all, listening. It begins with listening. We're going to observe and reflect. What is the child doing? What does the child appear to be trying to figure out? What appears to be the child's hypothesis? And we've used that phrase a couple of times now. It means, how is the child thinking? "If I do this, I think that will happen." And we document them. By document we mean just hold it in memory with photos or notes that can be shared later with others. By documenting, we can return to it later and discuss it later with others in order to decide what we do next, to decide the next steps in our curriculum because we want to support the infants and toddlers.

In the words of Carlina Rinaldi, "We want to support them in going deeper in their research." This is what we mean by reflective planning. So again, if we go back and ask for a little more insight from Carlina Rinaldi from the schools in the – the infant/toddler schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, she gives us some very, very helpful words here. She says – with respect to documentation and how we reflect on the documentation, she says, "We ask ourselves what kind of context, what kind of possibility can you offer to the children for the next step and the next step? Not because you know the next step, but because you want to offer a possibility for going deeper and deeper in their research."

So, it's this willingness to join with infants in this sense of wonder. This – this willingness to not know but to wonder about, "If I do this, what might the infants do in response?" It is this way of thinking that really helps us interpret the documentation and to pose possibilities. In fact, when I think of curriculum planning with infants and toddlers I like to think of it as posing questions, like, "What might happen if we offer infants...?" Or, "In what ways might they explore if we add these tubes to the play space?" When we pose questions this way, it prompts us to go in search of the answer. So we observe to see what happens and we listen with care, and we document to hold in memory significant aspects of what we see or hear.

So, let's look at some examples of what written plans look like. Here, again thinking about what Margie was telling us, we're going to look at what happens if we think of play spaces as context for curriculum. Here's an example of that. The – the example is actually the one we've been working with. It's Severyn being invited to explore some ordinary objects alongside the other regular toys. The plan in question is, "What will Severyn do in response to the ordinary objects added to his collection of familiar toys?"

And then, you can see on the left side – you can see the observer made some notes to hold in memory what Severyn did. Not everything – not everything he did is written down, but just what the observer felt was significant. And then, over on the right side of the screen is the interpretation or the reflection of what occurred during the play. Again, not everything but just what the observer thinks is significant to name with respect to the learning.

So through these notes and photos, it's possible to name that learning, that in this situation he appeared to notice that the two objects were alike. And then we can do the same thing with routines if we want to think about, how do we plan ways to invite the toddlers to use emerging skills or concepts within the daily routines? Again, going back to the example Margie was talking about, what might happen if we – if we offer the toddlers a chance to pour their own milk? This could become a part of the written plan.

Here you see the teachers proposed the possibilities for toddlers to pour and to serve during the meal. That's in the planning question. And then later, the teachers are going to record their notes and the observations – that's the documentation – that they can then share together with family members or coworkers and reflect together on what it – how the infants and toddlers are revealing their understanding of pouring and quantity and filling an emptying and note what emerging skills they see. So on this sheet we can also write what we may want to do next to help them deepen those – that understanding or those skills.

And then we have the third context for curriculum that Margie was sharing with us, and that would be the everyday conversations and the interactions. And we can actually include those in the written plans, as well. And if we're thinking, "Hmm, how are we going – how are we going to deal with the biters?" Or, "How are we going to deal with – how do we intervene when – when the toddlers are having a hard time sharing?" That becomes the center of our curriculum plan as well, and you can see here the teachers have written a planning question around the social-emotional curriculum, the guidance issues.

What will the toddlers do when we start responding to a bite or to aggression with phrases like, "I can tell you're angry because he won't give you that truck but it's not okay for you to bite him. Biting hurts people. You can tell him, 'I want that truck,' but you may not bite him."

So, if there's an intention to how we're going to intervene then that gets written into the plan. And then, again, we record how toddlers respond. We might take a photo and then we share it later with others and discuss what does this mean. How are infants and toddlers revealing their understanding of how to get along with each other negotiate a problem together?

So, critical to this way of planning is having time to discuss or reflect together on what we write down, our notes, or the photos that we take. Time to interpret this kind of documentation in order to help us understand infants and toddlers, and in order to plan well for their learning. Having regularly scheduled time to review the documentation, it's very, very important. But you know what? It is not always easy to find. So, we'd like to hear your thoughts on this idea. What are your thoughts on the idea of having such time for reflective dialogue? So, Emily's going to ask you once again just to give us your thoughts on this. Emily?

Emily: Thank you. So for those of you who work in programs or who work with programs, we would like you to let us know – what do you think? Is this realistic, this time to sit together with your co-teacher or, you know, maybe with a supervisor and just think about what's going on with your program to really reflect on the documentation? So maybe, you know, if you're TA, does this feel realistic for the programs that you're supporting? You know, if you're in a classroom, is this kind of planning time available for you? Or if – you know, maybe if you're a home visitor, do you have this opportunity to think about your documentation and to really kind of step back and be reflective about what's going on with these children and their families?

So, let's see. I would like to give you just a couple more minutes. I think there's some of you who haven't answered and we'd really like you to let us know. You know, how hard is this? Is this something that programs are really able to do well or is this really a struggle? You know, I think that you're the only ones who can tell us this. So – so, go ahead and let us know. Yes, I agree; we definitely – yes, we have this time to study and reflect and we have a space where we can do that. Or no, this really doesn't happen very much in my program or in my experience.

So, I think we're just getting – getting a few more people. If you would please go ahead and answer for us. You know, I think we're kind of hovering here around 60 percent or so are – are feeling like yes, this is something that they are able to do in their program. This is realistic. They can gather documentation. They can study it and reflect on it when they're doing their planning. But you know, 40 percent, which is kind of a lot, looks like are really still struggling.

So, you know, I'm hoping once we have all of this great information that Janie and Margie have shared with us about how important this is to planning an infant and toddler curriculum that we can really work with program leaders to find the time and the space to make this happen. So, thank you so much for kind of sharing with us your own experience here. And Janie, would you like to go ahead and take this?

Mary Jane: This – this was – I think this was one of our most fascinating survey responses. Indeed, you know, it's reflective dialogue, having those conversations around dialogue – or around the documentation. It's not easy to find that time during the day. But you know what? I think the survey results show loud and clear that it's something we need to strive for if we're really going to honor infant and toddlers' unique ways of learning.

And – [Clears throat] excuse me – such time to talk together, to think together, is very different from having a staff meeting because this kind of reflective dialogue around the documentation focuses on that. It focuses on how the infants and toddlers are revealing to us their thinking and their skills. And it requires time for us to – to discuss, to study, and it – it pulls up some critical questions that Margie and I like to talk about as being the key questions that drive these reflective conversations. First, what do you notice? It allows people a chance to really look at the documentation and draw out each person's perspective on what each person sees in the photo or the note.

And then asking, "How did the children reveal their thinking in this photo or in what we saw them do or say?" This helps us name the learning, and that's where we do the assessment. That's how we – the ongoing documentation – it informs how we assess the learning with respect to concepts and skills that are emerging. And then we ask from that same piece of documentation and those conversations – then we can start to talk about what we do next to help the infants and toddlers go deeper in their understanding or in their skills. This is how – this is what drives our curriculum planning.

And then last but not least by a long shot, we ask how might we invite families to join us in this work. And this really underscores the close connection between teachers, families, family service workers, and the infants and toddlers that we serve. So, you can think about documentation as being a very, very powerful tool. It supports us in many, many ways. It guides curriculum. It helps us engage families. It provides evidence for periodic assessment. It certainly helps us understand infants and toddlers better and to grow ourselves as professionals.

And then as we document it, we also find ways to improve our program. So for program improvement, it's huge. And then finally, documentation is a tool for advocacy and it – as it helps others see how infants and toddlers learn. And so as we weave the idea of school readiness goals into our work with infants and toddlers, it's important to remember that learning is a journey.

So if you look on the screen right now, this – this is what we'd like to end with. Learning is a journey, not a race. And that the travelers on this journey are infants and toddlers who arrive at birth ready to investigate the world around them. They ask us to be their traveling companions on their journey as

they figure out the fascinating world. There are many possible routes for this curriculum journey. Every group of infants, families, and teachers negotiates together what their route will be.

There is no one prescribed curriculum, no set series of lessons to do to get infants learning. Instead, three things are required: to not only care for infants and toddlers but to care about them; to wonder with them about the many things they encounter; and to learn alongside them, discovering ways to support them in going deeper in their research.

We'd like to let Dr. Carlina Rinaldi give us our final words, and you'll see them on the screen as I read them: "If we believe that children possess their own theories, interpretations, and questions... then the most important verbs in educational practice are no longer 'to talk,' 'to explain,' or 'to transmit' – but 'to listen.' "

So Margie and I and Emily hope that you have enjoyed listening during this webinar – listening to Will, to Severyn, to Wyatt, and the other babies who have joined us in this webinar. And we hope this has helped you see that curriculum for infants and toddlers means offering engaging play spaces, inviting infants to actively participate in the daily care routines, and also in being mindful of what we say and do during conversations and interactions with infants and toddlers. These are the three contexts that help us think about infants and toddlers and the curriculum we offer them.

So, we now have reached the point where we would like to invite you to share questions and share comments with us. Emily, you want to take us through that part?

Emily: Yes. Thank you so much. A really heartfelt thank you, to Mary Jane, and to Margie. We all really appreciate the expertise that you bring to this topic and shared with us today, as well as the wonderful experts you brought along and pictures and stories to really illustrate your message.

At this time, we really would like to ask for questions from you. We've gotten some participation so far from you and now we want to know, what are your questions? What are you thinking? Please send your questions to the leaders and assistants under the private tab under your chat box. And we will answer the questions, as many as we can in the time that we have.

So I actually have a first question here for you, and so I'm going to go ahead and ask. Somebody wrote in and said, "Many teachers feel like they are not doing their job well if they are not actively teaching infants and toddlers. How can we help staff understand that setting up experiences is more important than direct teaching?"

Mary Jane: Right. And – and really that question underscores the whole intent of this webinar. And a lot of what Margie and I have tried to do as we work with – with infant/toddler teachers is to invite them to watch and wonder – watch babies and wonder with us. And once you – once you engage teachers in the act of slowing down and noticing how infants and toddlers are actually revealing to us their learning in their play, then it empowers us to think differently about curriculum. It – it prompts the question, "And what might happen if we then add this to the play space? What do you think they'll do then?" Margie, do you have any thoughts to add to that?

Margie: And I was just thinking it comes back to having the time for the teachers to talk about what they see that the children are interested in and then be able to plan from there.

Emily: Yeah. Thank you so much. So, it really goes back to what you both were talking about around just really observing and letting children kind of show us what they're learning. So, thank you.

Mary Jane: Can I – let me add...

Emily: Yeah.

Mary Jane: ...something very quickly to that, because – and some of that watching and wondering can happen right in the – in the classroom. You know, it doesn't have to be time away, time off the floor, etc. Not to say that we don't want the latter too, you know, but just grabbing two minutes of time and – and just being a fly on the wall with the teacher and say, "Let's just watch. Let's just see what they do with these materials."

Emily: That's a wonderful idea. Just sort of being aware in the moment, too; thank you. So how – another question we have is, "How do we make sure that these kind of found or recycled materials for use with infants and toddlers are actually very safe for them to manipulate?"

Mary Jane: And I'm glad someone came up with that question because that – we always have to look at – especially if you're doing group care where you've got multiple children in an environment. My rule of thumb is never put anything in the play space that is – that will fit into a toilet paper roll – cardboard toilet paper roll along any single one dimension. And that's what they call the "no choke test tube measure." And so, what you don't want to do is to leave small items into the play space that could potentially cause choking. And that would be my rule of thumb in terms of what kind of things I would consider putting into the play spaces for infants and toddlers in a group care setting or in a setting where infants might be alone with those materials.

Margie: And I also have run things through the dishwasher that most people wouldn't think about, like when I collect sticks on the beach and those kinds of things. And they've come out fine. And I think, though, that you do always want to look at rounded edges and those kinds of safety – you know, everyday safety kinds of things before you put them in the classrooms. And also, that you're always observing how children are using the materials – and that's all materials, though – when you have them in the classroom.

Mary Jane: And then of course, you know, making sure that if you're using natural materials, plant-based materials, there are many, many plants that you can bring into the play space for toddlers to explore that are non-toxic. Just so they have a chance to kind of pick the little blossoms off – off of the little branch. I mean, that's where botany begins; it's just taking a leaf and just sort of crushing it in your – in your fingers. So, there are certainly ways for us to invite infants and toddlers to explore the natural world in ways that are very safe.

Emily: Thank you. Yeah, absolutely. And of course, supervision with any kind of materials is key. So, can you tell us – somebody asks, "In your experience, what are some simple tips that staff can begin to use to capture information about infants and toddlers?"

Mary Jane: Do you think the person is asking about...

Emily: Documentation, maybe?

Mary Jane: Yes, documentation.

Emily: Yeah. How are you – what kind of ways can you use documentation?

Mary Jane: And – and how do you do it easily? I think my favorite thing lately is a camera that can do video. And more and more of our cameras these days give you the – allow you to just do either a short video clip or to take – and you can take still photos off of that video. In fact, those little still shots of Severyn exploring the soap dish, that was actually from a short video. So, having access to a camera is really lovely. But you know what? Just having access to the power to observe [Laughter] and just to watch, and then just making notes about what you see. That's – I mean, you don't need a lot of fancy technology to actually observe and document. So, having tools – those – you know, access to paper, pencil, and a simple camera in the classroom is very, very important I think.

Margie: But I think having also access to the parents, that you really appreciate their input in giving you some of the documentation that they have, is so important too. Because there's so many times you can use their direction that they give you about their children's interests and use that as part of your documentation.

Mary Jane: Because part of what we're trying to do here is to excite family members to watch and wonder about – with their babies, too, so that they too are supported in realizing that they've got – literally, they have scientists for babies and that, if they watch their play, their babies will reveal to them how they're – every day they're growing and learning. And I think it just kind of helps empower family members to support their infants and toddlers in learning.

Emily: Thank you so much. That was actually the perfect summation of this, that babies are scientists and we can really watch them and let them reveal all of the amazing things they're learning. So, I really wanted to thank you both so much again for everything that you did to prepare for this and everything that you shared with us. This has just been such a pleasure, and I think it's going to be very helpful for people to be able to kind of understand what we mean by reflective curriculum planning. And I'd also like to thank all of our participants for clicking in with the questions and the surveys and the feedback and the polls. That just made this so interesting for all of us. So I really appreciate everybody's participation, and we look forward to much more of our Virtual Birth to Three. Thank you so much.

Margie: Thank you.

Mary Jane: Thank you.

Kelly: This concludes today's webinar. Thank you for your participation.